

List of other Ornithological Publications received.

FLOWER, S. S. Report on the Zoological Service [Egypt] for the Year 1920.

HELLMAYR, C. E. Review of the Birds collected by D'Orbigny. Pt. ii. (Nov. Zool. xxviii. pp. 230-276.)

LÖNNBERG, E. Bidrag till kännedomen om ormvråkens näringssvanor. (Sven. Jägereförb. Tidskr. årg. lix.)

PHILLIPS, J. C. A further report on species crosses in birds. (Genetics, vol. vi. pp. 366-383.)

Anzeiger Orn. Ges. in Bayern. (No. 4.)

Auk. (Vol. xxxviii. no. 3.)

Avicultural Magazine. (Vol. xii. nos. 9-11.)

Bird-Lore. (Vol. xxiii. no. 5.)

Bird Notes. (Vol. iv. nos. 8-11.)

British Birds. (Vol. xv. nos. 4-7.)

Canadian Field Naturalist. (Vol. xxxv. no. 4.)

Condor. (Vol. xxiii. no. 5.)

Emu. (Vol. xxi. nos. 1, 2.)

Fauna och Flora. (1921, nos. 4, 5.)

Gerfaut. (Vol. xi. nos. 3, 4.)

Hornero. (Vol. ii. no. 3.)

Irish Naturalist. (Vol. xxx. nos. 9-11.)

Journal Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc. (Vol. xxvii. no. 4.)

Oologists' Record. (Vol. i. no. 3.)

Ornithologische Monatsberichte. (Vol. xxix. nos. 9-12.)

Revue d'Hist. nat. appliquée. (Vol. ii. nos. 8-11.)

Revue Française d'Ornith. (Nos. 150, 151.)

Scottish Naturalist. (Nos. 117, 118.)

South African Journal of Nat. Hist. (Vol. iii. no. 1.)

South Australian Ornithologist. (Vol. vi. no. 3.)

Verhandl. Orn. Ges. in Bayern. (Vol. xv. no. 1.)

XII.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

Little Ringed Plover in the Balearic Islands.

SIR,—At the Eighth Oological Dinner, September 8, 1921, Mr. Jourdain exhibited a small series of eggs which he said were Kentish Plovers', *Ægialitis alexandrina*, taken in the Balearic Isles in 1919-1920, calling

attention to their similarity to the eggs of the Little Ringed Plover, *Aegialitis dubia* (Bull. B. O. C. xli. 1921, p. 89).

At the time I took very little notice of them, as my opinion was not asked. However, at a subsequent meeting of the B. O. C., Mr. Jourdain again exhibited these eggs, and I was then requested to give an opinion on them, and immediately challenged Mr. Jourdain's identification, and suggested an error in regard to identification on the part of Capt. P. W. Munn, who took them. Members of the Club will doubtless remember that Mr. Jourdain was most emphatic in his remarks supporting Capt. Munn's identification, and adding that the Little Ringed Plover was not breeding in the Balearic Isles, neither had they been seen there. In this he was supported by Mr. Witherby, who added that Mr. Munn had most carefully identified the eggs. I still maintain that the eggs are those of the Little Ringed Plover, and that an error has been made. In support of this, I now find that Mr. Munn *did* find the Little Ringed Plover breeding on the Balearic Isles in 1921 (*Ibis*, 1921, p. 712).

It is quite possible that the Kentish Plover was brooding on eggs of the Lesser Ringed Plover, hence the error. The love of brooding is well known to many field naturalists, and I have myself known the Kentish Plover to brood the eggs of the Ringed Plover, *Aegialitis hiaticula*, on Dungeness beach. It is also well known that the Bar-tailed Godwit, *Limosa lapponica*, will brood the eggs of the Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*.

I have had considerable experience with the eggs of the Kentish Plover, both in England and the Channel Islands, and in my series there is not a single egg which could be mistaken for those of either the Ringed or Lesser Ringed Plovers.

I have never taken the eggs of *A. dubia*, but they are well known to me, and I cannot understand any experienced oologist confusing the eggs of the two species. To my mind

they are most distinctive, especially as regards the ground-colour, shape, and size.

P. F. BUNYARD.

57 Kidderminster Road,

Croydon.

24 October, 1921.

Bird-Migration and the Marking Method.

SIR,—May I be allowed to reply briefly to Mr. H. W. Robinson's letter in the last number of '*The Ibis*,' commenting on my paper on "Bird-Migration and the Marking Method"? Among other things, I must register a modest disavowal of any claim to the title "Professor" which he bestows upon me!

It would be easy to add to Mr. Robinson's list of "omissions" from my paper, but I do not now wish to do more than correct any impression that my account of the Aberdeen University results was intended as a complete summary of the subject in general. My short digression on the history of the marking method indeed admitted that similar work had been taken up "in other parts of the Continent" not mentioned in further detail, and the list of published papers gave merely references relevant to the text and was in no sense an attempt at a bibliography. Similarly, the references to the results of other investigators were obviously and avowedly "by no means exhaustive." In particular, it was not thought desirable to refer in any detail to the results of Mr. H. F. Witherby's '*British Birds*' scheme (to which Mr. Robinson's great personal efforts have been an important contribution), because the work is happily still in progress and will doubtless lead to valuable amplifications—and perhaps modifications—of the *interim* results, summarised and otherwise, which have already been published. I should be more than sorry, however, to have conveyed any false impression of stinting admiration for so great an undertaking, of which I indeed said that "the eventual

publication of the collected and analysed results will be an event of great importance to students of migration."

Finally, it may be doubted whether ornithologists are as yet prepared to accept the evidence mentioned by Mr. Robinson, to the extent of regarding it as complete and final proof that for the young to seek exactly the same winter-quarters as their particular parents is a general rule among migratory birds. The existing evidence, however, does at least confirm the point of my original remark, which was to the effect that this sort of question is eminently suitable for investigation by the marking method.

A. LANDSBOROUGH THOMSON.

9 Addison Gardens,
Kensington, W.14.
17 October, 1921.

A possible Mendelian variation in Nature.

SIR,—Colonel Meinertzhagen's paper on "Subspecies and Evolution" (Ibis, 1921, p. 528) covers a wide field and touches on many unsolved and controversial problems. This note is concerned only with one comparatively small point. In several passages Colonel Meinertzhagen states or implies that variations of the kind studied by the Mendelians are only known to occur under artificial conditions. The exact breeding experiments by which Mendelian theories are tested must of necessity be under artificial control, but at least in the case of plants and insects many of the characters which have proved to be inherited after the Mendelian fashion were first found in nature. As applied to birds, however, Colonel Meinertzhagen's contention is not without some foundation, since domestic poultry are the only birds of which the genetics have been at all adequately investigated. That is why it may be worth while to suggest that the well-known *montana* variety of the Common Partridge is a case of Mendelian variation occurring in nature.

In the adult *montana* Partridge the two prevailing colours have, so to speak, run. The buff-colour has spread over the whole head and neck, the chestnut has spread over the body and wings, and the result is a bird singularly unlike the normal Partridge. This strange variation was first described (as a distinct species) from Lorraine, where it seems to have occurred frequently. But it has occurred also in Spain, in Rumania, in Norfolk, in Northumberland, in the Lowlands of Scotland; probably in many other districts too. In any case it seems plain that it is not a localized freak, but a variation which is liable to crop out in the partridge stock wherever the species is found. That alone would be enough to suggest that the *montana* form, with its remarkable constancy over a wide geographical range, is due to some such definite factor in inheritance as is dealt in by the Mendelians—perhaps to the loss of one of the germinal factors regulating the development of the colour-pattern in the normal bird. But there is also evidence of another kind pointing in the same direction. If, as I am inclined to suggest, the *montana* colour-pattern is “recessive” (in the Mendelian sense) to the normal colour-pattern, we should expect (1) that when it does appear it would only be in, roughly, a quarter of the brood, except (2) when both parents are of the *montana* form, and then the whole brood should be *montana* birds. This expectation does, in fact, seem to be realized as far as the evidence goes. In mid-Northumberland, where *montana* Partridges are of comparatively frequent occurrence, there are usually only about two birds of that form in a covey. Being very conspicuous they are nearly always shot, and with equal regularity regarded as hybrids with the Red Grouse. There is little chance in nature of two adult *montana* birds surviving, pairing, and rearing a brood. Nevertheless this seems to have happened at least twice in Northumberland, for Mr. George Bolam, in his ‘Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders,’ pp. 473–7, records two cases in which whole coveys were of the *montana* form, and in

one case it was known that both parents were of that form too.

If shooting-men and their keepers could be persuaded to catch and pen these birds instead of shooting them, we should probably be able to settle all question as to their genetic constitution by a few simple breeding experiments.

E. LEONARD GILL.

Hancock Museum,
Newcastle-on-Tyne.
20 October, 1921.

Nestling Plumages of Owls.

SIR,—It seems clear from Mr. Bonhote's letter on this subject in the October 'Ibis' (pp. 755-7) that he now agrees with me so far that there is only one generation of down preceding the juvenile feather-plumage in the Eagle-Owl, it being understood, of course, that the various generations of a feather grow from the same papilla.

Having thus cleared the ground, it remains to be decided as to whether there is another down (presumably growing from papillæ different from those of the feathers) as Mr. Bonhote contends, or whether this is (notwithstanding its down-like nature in certain tracts) a part of the juvenile plumage, as I still think after a further examination of the material available. A final decision on this point must, I suggest, be left to that "careful further study" which Mr. Bonhote, quite rightly, says the subject requires.

J. H. Gurney (senr.), whom Mr. Bonhote quotes, obtained his information from Mr. E. Fountaine, and it seems to me probable that he called the downy juvenile-feathers "down," as many people still do. The same suggestion applies to M. Lavauden's remarks and the bird he figures as in "second down," and neither of these observations appears to assist us greatly in determining the point.

In the Hawks it is very clear, as I have already described in 'British Birds' (Dec. 1920, pp. 154-5) and also in the

'Practical Handbook,' that the nestlings have, besides a down directly succeeded by the feathers growing from the same papillæ, two other downs which are not succeeded by feathers. But the Hawks have a thick under-down in the feathered state, while the Owls have not, and in the former these nestling-downs which are not succeeded by feathers may be pre-plumulæ. I have, however, been unable to prove this, as in no case have I found the nestling-down attached to the under-down of the feathered bird.

H. F. WITHERBY.

Hampstead,
November 1921.

On a blue-grey example of *Egretta garzetta*.

SIR,—In 'A History of Birds,' p. 299, Mr. Pycraft, writing of the dimorphism shown by the Reef-Herons, says:—"It seems highly probable that we have in these instances an illustration of the lines of evolution which will ultimately end in the suppression of the dark and the survival of the white forms. *The evolution of the White Egrets has probably followed precisely similar lines.*" (Italics mine, A. L. B.)

In support of the latter theory I should like to place on record that in March 1911, on the Dinder River, I met with a blue-grey example of *EGRETTA GARZETTA*. Walking alone ahead of my men and camels I came to a pool in the dried-up river-bed which seemed a suitable place for the midday halt. Here I sat down, concealing myself in the bush on the bank, to watch any wild creatures that might visit the pool until the arrival of my transport. Almost immediately two birds alighted on the water within twenty yards of me. One was a normal Lesser White Egret, but the other was of a most beautiful clear blue- or lavender-grey throughout. They remained on the pool for some fifteen minutes, during the whole of which time I was examining and comparing them through field-glasses.

That both birds were of the same species, and that the species was *Egretta garzetta* I have no doubt. In size, form, and actions—in everything but colour of plumage and soft parts—they were identical. The grey bird had a greenish-yellow bill and olive-green legs, in contrast with the black bill and legs of its white companion. I was carrying a Mauser rifle and only some soft-nosed bullet cartridges, and though I could easily have killed the grey bird with this, I hesitated to do so, feeling sure that I should spoil it as a specimen, and expecting my men to come up with my shot-gun at any minute. Unfortunately before their arrival both birds rose together and flew out of sight, the grey bird flying closely behind the white one. Again, on the wing, the similarity of the birds in size, shape, and wing-stroke—in everything but colour—was exact.

I am well acquainted with both the grey and the white forms of *Demiegretta schistacea* (and with two other species of dimorphic Reef-Herons), and I am certain that I did not mistake two birds of this species for *Egretta garzetta*. Moreover, the delicate blue-grey of the coloured bird was quite different from that of *Demiegretta schistacea*, being entirely free from any blackish or slaty tinge.

I quite anticipate that the correctness of my identification will be doubted, being unconfirmed by the securing of the bird, and for this reason I have had considerable hesitation in offering this note to 'The Ibis.' But I shall remain convinced that the bird exemplified a reversion to an ancestral phase in the evolution of *Egretta garzetta* which must be of extremest rarity in this species, in which no tendency to dimorphism has hitherto been recorded.

A. L. BUTLER.

St. Leonard's Park,
Horsham,
14 November, 1921.

Report of the British Museum.

From the Return of the British Museum for 1920 we cull the following items of interest relating to the Bird-Room.

Valuable assistance in the arrangement of the collection and determination of the accessions has been given by Mr. C. W. Mackworth-Praed and others. Mr. W. L. Slater has made a revision of the Birds of Prey and prepared a manuscript catalogue of the group. Capt. H. Lynes, C.B., R.N., has worked out the valuable collection made on his expedition to Darfur and presented by him to the Museum. Mr. D. A. Bannerman has continued his work on the Birds of West Africa, and Mr. C. Chubb has worked at the South American Birds and has also continued the list of type-specimens in the collection.

Among more important acquisitions are:—

- 41 Birds from Mesopotamia and Persia presented by Mr. P. A. Buxton, and 172 birds and 69 eggs from the same region presented by Capt. C. R. S. Pitman.
- 37 Birds from Ceylon, presented by Mr. W. W. A. Phillips.
- 608 Birds from Sumatra, presented by Messrs. H. C. Robinson and C. B. Kloss.
- A restoration of the White Dodo of Bourbon (*Didus borbonicus*) and a West African Ostrich (*Struthio camelus*) from the Gold Coast, presented by the Trustees of the Rowland Ward bequest.
- 727 Birds from Darfur and Kordofan, including many types, presented by Capt. H. Lynes, C.B., R.N.
- 569 Birds from Cameroon, presented by Mr. G. L. Bates.
- 133 Birds from northern Rhodesia, including one type, presented by Col. Stephenson Clarke, C.B.
- 608 Birds from Sierra Leone and Nigeria collected by Mr. W. P. Lowe.
- 270 Birds and 923 eggs from Argentina, presented by Mr. Ernest Gibson.
- 840 Birds from Peru, presented by the late Lord Brabourne.

Altogether 5540 skins and 1333 eggs have been added to the collection during 1920.

Bird Protection in Norfolk.

From the 'Eastern Daily Press' we learn that the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society will in future become responsible for the special protection of the Terns and other interesting and rare birds met with in certain parts of Norfolk. This work was formerly carried out by several small local societies dealing with limited areas, such as the districts of Wolferton, Wells and Holkham, Blakeney Point, and Breydon Water. Furthermore, His Majesty the King and His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales have been pleased to become Patron and Vice-Patron respectively of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, and to transfer the subscriptions which they formerly gave to Wolferton Wild Birds' Protection Society to the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society.

Mr. Bannerman's work on the Canary Islands.

Messrs. Gurney and Jackson have in the press and will shortly publish a book by Mr. David A. Bannerman on "The Canary Islands: their History, Natural History, and Scenery." It will deal very fully with the Ornithology of the Islands and contains accounts of Mr. Bannerman's many visits and camping trips to the various islands of the Archipelago. The book will be fully illustrated by photographs taken by the author, and by maps.

The Everest Expedition.

Mr. Wollaston returned from Tibet with the other members of the Mt. Everest Expedition early in December last, bringing with him considerable collections of zoological and botanical specimens. The bird-skins number 255, representing 55 species; there are no actual novelties, though a Wren of the genus *Troglodytes* appears to be

unlike anything in the British Museum collections; unfortunately only a single skin was obtained, and that one of a young bird, so that it would be hazardous to describe it as new. The highest altitude at which a bird was obtained was 18,500 feet on the eastern slopes of Mt. Everest, where Mr. Wollaston procured an example of the Alpine Accentor, *Laiscopus collaris nipalensis*.

Personal.

Mr. T. CHROSTOWSKI, of the Polish Museum of Natural History at Warsaw, writes that he is shortly leaving for South America to renew his investigations into the avifauna of that continent, which were interrupted by the outbreak of the war. He will be glad to correspond with any ornithologists interested in Neotropical Birds and to exchange papers with them. His address is as above.

Notice to Contributors.

At the last meeting of the Committee of the Union the following resolution was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Major Sladen, and carried unanimously :

"In consequence of the great expense incurred in the correction of MS. and proof of the papers submitted to the Editor, authors are warned that they may be called upon to pay for any corrections made other than printers' errors."

It has been found that the cost of corrections in proof of 'The Ibis' for 1920 and 1921 was 25 per cent. and 28 per cent. respectively on the total cost of printing the letterpress, and the Committee feel that this is much higher than it should be and that considerable saving could be made if authors were more careful in the preparation of their manuscript or typescript before sending it to the Editor.